

file 287

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Central Intelligence Agency



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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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France-Afghanistan

Summary

France has provided humanitarian aid [redacted] since 1984 [redacted] to the Afghan insurgents.

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French support for the resistance grows out of strong anti-Soviet feelings within President Mitterrand's ruling Socialist Party, public opposition to Soviet aggression [redacted] [redacted] We believe that French [redacted] economic aid to the insurgency is likely to remain modest because of budgetary constraints. [redacted]

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State Dept. review completed

This typescript was prepared by [redacted] in the Office of European Analysis. [redacted] Questions and comments may be addressed to the Chief, Western European Division, at [redacted]

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Humanitarian Aid

Paris has contributed to several private organizations -- including the well-known Medecins Sans Frontieres group -- that send European medical and relief personnel inside Afghanistan to aid insurgents and civilians. These organizations, run for the most part by French civilians, have sent more than 200 young Europeans, many of whom are French, into Afghanistan. Fifteen Europeans are currently inside the country, [redacted]

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[redacted] these volunteers provide the best medical care available to rural Afghans; they often perform major surgery, establish inoculation programs, treat lesser illnesses, and train Afghan paramedics. [redacted]

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Beyond its medical efforts, France has also funded Afghan refugee programs. Paris has donated about 15,000 tons of wheat and has encouraged the Common Market to increase its shipments of butter and oil during the last several years, according to the US Embassy in Paris [redacted]

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France's Socialist Party has also lent support to efforts to publicize the cause of the Afghan insurgents. [redacted] PS officials are organizing a conference of European Socialist Parties for late-June, tentatively entitled "The European Left and Afghanistan." This effort is almost certainly an attempt to compensate for the PS's failure to persuade the Socialist International to issue a statement in 1984 supporting the Afghan resistance. [redacted]

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Behind the French Support

The government's support for the Afghan resistance stems largely from President Mitterrand's generally anti-Soviet views and strong opposition within his Socialist Party to Soviet adventurism. Mitterrand believes the expansion of Soviet influence is the gravest threat to the development of the Third World and to international stability, [redacted]

25X1 [redacted] he views the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan as a particularly brutal manifestation of Soviet expansionism. Mitterrand's own participation in the French Resistance during World War II, we believe, may also contribute to a personal affinity with the Afghan cause. [redacted]

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Longstanding French scholarly interest in Afghanistan has also spurred French support for the insurgents, most importantly by arousing opposition to Soviet actions within influential intellectual circles. A number of well-known French intellectuals -- especially the anthropologist Oliver Roy -- are outspoken backers of the resistance and travel frequently to Afghanistan to report on the state of the insurgency. There are also a large number of French journals covering Afghanistan -- Les Nouvelles Afghanistan is the most prominent -- and the insurgency receives an in-depth and almost universally sympathetic coverage in most major French dailies. [redacted]

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Outlook

Although French diplomatic support for the resistance will remain strong, Mitterrand is unlikely to increase aid to the Afghans significantly. Domestic economic constraints have forced sharp reductions [redacted]

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[redacted] Most importantly, French aid is constrained by the paucity of direct French interest in Afghan affairs; lacking commercial or longstanding cultural ties -- such as exist in Africa, for example -- a more active French role in support of the Afghans is unlikely. The influence of those who would support increased aid to the insurgents is, moreover, probably counter-

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balanced by the views of long-time Mitterrand confidant and new Foreign Minister, Roland Dumas. Dumas believes that Afghanistan is not a major problem for the Soviets and that, in any event, France can do little to help the resistance succeed against Moscow's superior strength,

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Paris also probably assumes the US will play the major role in assistance programs and can be counted on to take up any slack. French officials decided recently not to mount a major food aid program in 1985, for example, because they believe US assistance will meet current needs. according to the US Embassy.

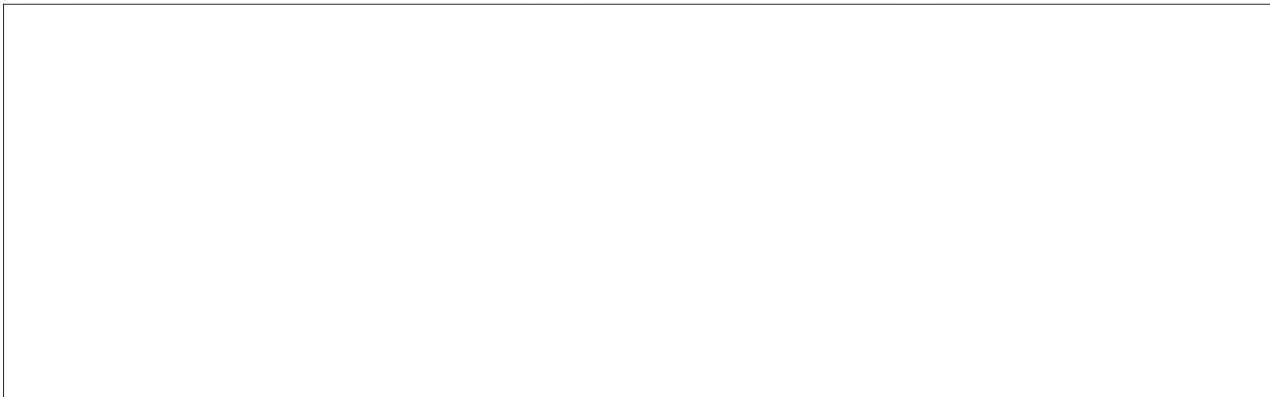
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The French right, which stands a good chance of winning control of the National Assembly in 1986 and the presidency in 1988, is unlikely to boost French aid substantially. Although some conservatives would almost certainly favor a larger role and some, such as Centrist leader Francois Leotard, have taken a strong personal interest in the insurgency, the right will probably be restrained by the same fiscal considerations as the Socialists.

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Appendix



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Distribution:
Original

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